

# THE MARSHLANDER

## OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September, 2020, Volume L, Issue VII

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the Marshlander



**Ogeechee Audubon Mission:**  
*Ogeechee Audubon educates adults and children about birds, wildlife, and the environment. We provide opportunities to enjoy the world around us, and advocate for responsible public policy and legislation for the conservation of our natural resources.*

### *Ogeechee Audubon Society Plans the first In-Person Socially Distanced Masked meeting!*



On September 19<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm at the Savannah Ogeechee Canal under the pavilion Ogeechee Audubon Society will have an in-person public meeting. It will be different than what we are used to. **First, it is on a Saturday during the day and outside under a pavilion!** Secondly, there are some rules to follow to insure everyone's health and safety. All are required to wear masks during the entire meeting. Everyone is asked to bring a chair and sit at least 6 feet apart. Please bring bug spray since we are outside. The number of participants will be limited to 25 attendees. You must sign up at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com) by September 14<sup>th</sup>. Voting for our officers will take place at this meeting. The presentation will be "The Accidental Birder in Kenya" by Leslie Weichsel. In addition, after the presentation, we plan to have bird walks at the canal. We will have small socially distanced groups go out. Please when you sign up for the meeting – indicate if you are interested in a bird walk since we need to have enough leaders. It has been a long while since we have met and I am hopeful that we can pull this off safely with your cooperation. In the event of rain – we will cancel – if you are unsure check our website or FB page that morning for information. Also, if the number of new cases of COVID go up in Chatham county and there is a high positivity rate, we will cancel as well. Our primary goal is to keep everyone safe. In the event you sign up but are unable to come please let us know asap so someone from the waitlist can attend.

-OAS Board of Directors

#### Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

##### Administrative Responsibilities

President	Leslie Weichsel
Vice President	Mary Lambright
Secretary	Marty Foxx
Treasurer	Pam Smith

##### Education Workgroup

Education Outreach	Diana Churchill,
Sue DeRosa, Rose Talbert	
Field Trips	John Williamson
Programs	Lynn Wrenn

##### Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Matt Tozar

##### Historian

Sandy Beasley

##### Conservation Workgroup

Entire Board

<p>Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop</p>	<p><b>Fresh Seed NO Fillers!</b></p>	<p><b>Bird Feeders Birdbaths Pole Systems And The Freshest Seed in Town!</b></p>	<p>8108 Abercorn Street Mon-Sat 10-6 Sunday 12-5 Next to Home Goods (912) 961-3455</p>	
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**This publication of the Marshlander is the sixth edition this year of the pandemic! We will be presenting articles, stories and photographs to keep you connected with birds and with Ogeechee Audubon Society during the time. I hope you enjoy it!**  
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**Ogeechee Audubon's Annual Meeting is scheduled for our next public meeting on September 19, 2020. At this meeting we will elect Officers for the Board. If you have any nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer please contact the Nominating Committee (Diana Churchill, Mary Lou Dickson, Marty Foxx) at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). Thank You.**  
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### **Membership**

A gentle reminder to all who have yet to renew your 2020 dues to please do so at your earliest convenience. We will be back and you do not want to miss out on what we have in store once activities resume! Please use the renewal form on the last page of this newsletter. If you are unsure of your membership status, please email us at [OgeecheeAudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:OgeecheeAudubon.help@gmail.com) to check.

Thank You!

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### **50 Years of Ogeechee Audubon**

**2020** marks the 50th anniversary of the Ogeechee Audubon Society! The members of the Board of Ogeechee Audubon will be planning celebratory events to mark fifty years of fulfilling our mission to educate adults and children about birds, wildlife, and the environment if not in this calendar year it will be in 2021.

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### **From the archives....**

#### **Ogeechee Audubon Society Newsletter, Volume 1, #1, November, 1970**

Some interesting tidbits:

\*The first OAS field trip was held on Saturday, November 7, 1970 at Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge with 35 people participating and participants ticking off 77 species of birds.

\*Three rare birds sighted were Blue Geese, Hudsonian Curlew, and Sandhill Crane.

\*Sam Young, field trip chairman, was planning for the December Christmas Bird Count.

\*The beginning membership was 71 with about 20 members who were already National Audubon Members for a total of about 90 members.

...from Sandy Beasley, Historian

## Experiencing the Winds of Change on Jekyll Island

...by Matt Tozer

On Sunday, August 16th, I made my first trip out to Jekyll Island for some early morning beach birding. Jekyll is of course one of Coastal Georgia's more famous birding destinations and I'm almost a little disappointed it's taken me so long to get down there. However, with so many great and similar sites like Hilton Head or Tybee Islands closer to home I guess I never felt the need to make the drive. Nevertheless, that weekend I was obliged to make myself scarce for a while and had the itch to explore some new territory so down I-95 I went.

I arrived to the St. Andrew's Picnic Area Parking lot on the South end of the Island a little after 6:30am, just as light from the newly risen sun was beginning to penetrate the woods. My plan was to walk around the Southern tip of the island on the beach, which according to eBird, is one the best spots and is also the area where a young Glaucous Gull has been lingering for some time. Early on, a high tide forced me to scramble through some fallen trees killed as the shoreline was scoured out from under them. As I clambered around the branches Laughing Gulls in mostly winter plumage wheeled overhead and fought over a few scraps picked up from the water's edge. Further out over the water Royal Terns and a few Brown Pelicans were moving, mostly out towards sea, occasionally plunge diving.

Shortly I broke out of the drowned forest and into the open. The beach expanded to a width of about 50 yards and on the landward side the maritime forest morphed into a sort of scrubby dune community interspersed with a few fingers of salt marsh. Immediately I began to pick up Barn Swallows in loose groups of threes and fours. The swallows were not coursing back and forth over the dune and marsh vegetation as would be typical of feeding birds. Instead they were flying directly (or about as directly as swallows are capable of) in an East to West direction. I also began hearing a few plaintive high-pitched chip calls and after several moments of searching the sky I started to pick up a few warbler-type birds, flying a good deal higher than the swallow, but in the same steady East to West direction. It slowly began to dawn on me that I was witnessing migration in action.

I get such a thrill over being able to see a bird in actual migratory flight. It's such a critical and dramatic time in their lives. Despite having spent countless hours witnessing the phenomenon, it's still a little difficult to wrap one's head around it. How can such small things travel across continents without even the benefit of directions?

Now, I wasn't really expecting to hit upon a good flight day, but maybe I should have. Swallows, warblers, and a number of other neotropical migrants should all be moving in earnest by mid-August. I was definitely in a pretty good location. Barrier islands like Jekyll Island have a way of concentrating many migrant birds. Most land birds are reluctant to cross large stretches of open water which offer no cover from predators and no foraging or resting opportunities. Nocturnal migrants that find themselves over open water as the sun rises will re-orient and head to the nearest land in sight. Conversely, birds moving during the day, when confronted with the appearance of the Atlantic Ocean will turn and hug the shoreline even if it doesn't quite conform to their desired direction of travel. This explains why the swallows and warblers I was currently watching were heading almost due West rather than South. They had come down the side of Jekyll Island and were confronted by a fairly daunting water crossing to get to the northern tip of Cumberland Island directly to the South. It seems most were opting to turn and make the much shorter jump West across Jekyll Sound and onto the mainland. Incidentally, for similar reasons most ultimately-Southbound migrating land birds at Cape May, New Jersey and along the South Shore of Long Island, New York are also seen moving East-to-West.

The warbler-type birds were far too high up to try and identify with my binoculars. I aimed my camera at a few of them and started firing off shots, hoping that my auto-focus would get lucky on a few and, once at home, I'd be able to zoom way in and come up with a species. As could be expected for the distance and still relatively dim light levels I was almost entirely unsuccessful. However, I did manage to grab a few pretty fuzzy pictures of an adult male American Redstart, which quite luckily don't lose their bold and unique plumage in the fall.

A short while later I spotted a group of a dozen or so larger passerine birds traveling together in a fairly tight group. These birds were close enough and large enough to recognize as Eastern Kingbirds with binoculars. Eastern Kingbirds have a fascinating life history in which they seem to take on totally different personas at different times of the year. For most of their time in North America during our spring and summer they



are feisty and highly territorial, any other nearby birds. they really mellow out and from a diet dominated by this change in behavior begins tree full of Kingbirds moving down to Georgia, but it occurrence in the late



I continued on down large resting flock of several and Laughing Gulls. The views. Towards the far end of Glaucous Gull stood about

As I was leaving the big flock, a peculiar looking medium-sized heron flew by. Luckily it set down several hundred yards up the beach on a little sand bar just below the water's surface. Once I got up a bit closer and was able to maneuver the sun to a slightly kinder angle, I was able to confirm that the bird was a Reddish Egret, a species I've only come across a few times, but one that is apparently somewhat regular for the site.



Shortly after my encounter with the Reddish Egret I turned around to head back to the car. I stayed fairly close to the dune vegetation keeping an eye on the steady stream of Barn Swallows that had not yet diminished. With close attention, I was eventually able to pick out a couple of Chimney Swifts and a few Cliff Swallows following the same heading. The migrating warblers had slowed to a trickle, but several Prairie Warblers and at least one Yellow Warbler foraged in the nearby shrubs, replenishing energy stores for an upcoming night's flight. A few birds were even considerate enough to pose briefly on the always aesthetically-pleasing sea oats.

I got back to the parking lot a bit tired, but nevertheless feeling pretty energized, and ready to see what else this year's fall migration may have in store.

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## Chasing “Uppies” – The Tale of Three Ogeechee Audubon Birders...

### #1 - Chasing “Uppies” – Diana Churchill

Mostly, if I want to find shorebirds, I head for the beach, a marsh or a tidal creek. Now that it is fall migration, I can find Willets, Whimbrels, Short-billed Dowitchers, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, and Least and Western Sandpipers.

What I don't tend to find by the shore are several other species of “shore” birds - Pectoral Sandpipers, Stilt Sandpipers, and those long-necked, big-eyed sandpipers - the upland sandpipers, known to birders as “Uppies.”

True to their name, upland sandpipers are generally found in grassy fields away from the beach. In Georgia, they are often found on sod or turf farms. The last ones I had seen were at Titan Turf Farm in Statesboro, but that was at least 15 years ago, before I started using a digital camera. Brenda Brannen, who lives in Statesboro, saw her last ones there in 2012.

This year, upland sandpipers were being reported at the Marshallville Super Sod Farm so I set aside a Saturday to make the 3-hour trek up to this area southwest of Macon.

Then on Friday, I got a text from a GOS member Kris Bisgard. She and Dan Vickers were in Statesboro taking her son to Georgia Southern. They were headed to the coast. When I mentioned my plans to head inland for “Uppies,” she said that she and Dan had found two that day at Titan Turf Farm.

“You may have just saved me a lot of driving,” I told her excitedly.

I immediately messaged Brenda and John Williamson with the news, and admonished them to get over there. Brenda went right away and found the birds. John was stuck in a work meeting but did go and eventually found the sandpipers – life birds for him.



“Please tie them down until tomorrow morning!” I gave them strict instructions.

7:30 am on Saturday morning found Brenda and I standing at the edge of a small subdivision adjacent to the turf farm with our scopes at the ready. Brenda was first on the mark.

“There they are,” she intoned reverently - “Out in the longer grass, beyond all the killdeer.” We looked and sure enough, found the slender, long-necked sandpipers walking about plucking insects from the grass. They were too far away to get good photos...

## #2 - Chasing “Uppies” – Pam Smith

... The birds, however, were skittish. Before we could set off for more photos, they took off headed to the southwest. I got several bad photos as they flew away. We looked for them again later that afternoon but without success.

The next day, I made a trip to Marshallville, on my way back from Valdosta, to search for the Uppies. Several other birders were there so they exchanged cell phone numbers before heading out to search different areas of the sod farm. After about 45 minutes of searching, Jane Seward sent me a text saying they'd found 7 Uppies in the corner of the sod farm near the Pecan Grove. Two other birders and I traveled to that location and were able to catch a glimpse of them before they flew to the other side of the farm. After another hour or so of tracking the Uppies, I was thrilled to get a few photos of the lovely Upland Sandpipers, which were a lifer for me!...



## #3 – Chasing “Uppies” – John Williamson

...The afternoon was dragging on. Ten minutes to go before the start of the weekend. The plan for Saturday was to drive three hours with Diana Churchill to the Marshallville Super Sod Farm near Macon to search for Upland Sandpipers. With times as they are, this would mean separate cars and social distancing. A necessary requirement, but not nearly as much fun. Then came the text. Two Upland Sandpipers were seen at Titan Turf Farm near Kennedy Pond in Statesboro earlier today. I live in Statesboro! The text said, “Get over there and find them and maybe it will save us lots of driving tomorrow!” As quick as possible I was on the move. “Uppies” would be a lifer and they were only a few miles away. With binoculars and camera in tow, off I went. My friends at work get a kick out of my passion for birding and the effort I’ll make to see a “lifer”. Without them realizing it they have even started using birding terms. It always brings a smile to my face.

Brenda Brannen had also received the text and had gotten there earlier. The second round of texts came from her reporting: “John, there are 2 still there”. After getting permission from the landowners, I started to walk the field. Plenty of



birds to be sure. 45 Killdeer, 64 Brown-headed Cowbirds, 35 Red-winged Blackbirds, 11 Eastern Bluebirds, 4 beautiful Blue Grosbeaks, and a lone Northern Mockingbird were fairly easy to spot. I had never actually see an Upland Sandpiper so I began to doubt myself. Did I even know what I was looking for? Would they stand out enough for me to locate and ID them? I checked the photos on my Merlin ID app again.

But then, out in the middle of the field amongst all the Killdeer, were two different birds starting back at me with huge caricature eyes. Their tiny little heads at the end of long slender necks gave them away. They were at quite the distance, but far away or not, I had found them! I was able to take a couple of photos that definitely won't win any photography awards, but were good enough for proof shots. And with that, I added number 257, The Upland Sandpiper, to my life list.

The excitement of it is fun because you never know what you'll end up seeing. Will they still be there or not? You never know. The other important part of this is the connections you make, the collaborative efforts, and the help along the way. Without the two birders that originally spotted them, Diana sending out the alert, the encouragement and tips from Brenda, and the permission of the two landowners, I'd still be at 256 and wouldn't have had nearly the adventure. In these trying times, it's proof that there are still good people around who enjoy nature, and even if they don't understand what the big deal is about seeing a funny looking bird with huge eyes, they're still willing to help.

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Following months of discussion with the Atlanta Board of Directors and staff, as well as in consultation with our partners and local Audubon chapters across the state, we are pleased to share with you that **Atlanta Audubon Society is now Georgia Audubon.**

The mass decline of bird populations over the past several decades is a warning about the health of our ecosystem. Birds are telling us it's time to act. With our expanded footprint as a statewide conservation organization, Georgia Audubon will be better positioned to tackle issues that affect birds throughout Georgia. Decades of threats ranging from climate change to habitat fragmentation to urbanization have left many bird species in peril in Georgia—birds such as the Brown-headed Nuthatch, Chimney Swift, Field Sparrow, and even our own State Bird, the Brown Thrasher.

With our new name comes a new statewide focus and partnerships with other Audubon chapters across Georgia to scale out successful programs, amplify the good work already being done, engage more people and more diverse communities, and enhance conservation efforts for birds across Georgia and the Atlantic Flyway. With so many threats facing Georgia's birds, it is now more critical than ever that we flock together to protect Georgia's birds.

Ogeechee Audubon congratulates and looks forward to working together with Georgia Audubon!

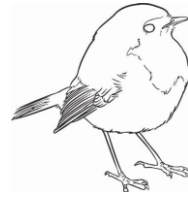


Contact:

Facebook: Ogeechee Audubon

Email: [Ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:Ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com)

Website: [www.ogeecheeaudubon.org](http://www.ogeecheeaudubon.org)



**New Opportunity for Young Birders: Fledgling Birder age 12 years and younger. \$5 membership fee. All benefits of Adult Membership. Each Fledge will receive a special sticker.**

**Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2020**

New membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Membership – please check level of membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Adult older than 18 years - \$20

\_\_\_\_\_ Household/Family - \$20

\_\_\_\_\_ Senior – individual (62 and older) - \$15

\_\_\_\_\_ Student – individual (13 years old to 18 years old) - \$15

\_\_\_\_\_ Fledgling Birder – individual (12 years old and younger) - \$5

Additional contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If household or family, additional names: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (mobile) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Ogeechee Audubon membership is for a calendar year – January to December. OAS Chapter renewals are accepted until March 31<sup>st</sup>.

All meeting information, events and important conservation issues will be communicated by email.

Ogeechee Audubon Newsletter – The *Marshlander* is sent by email to individual or household/family.

Please mail this form with your check to:

**Ogeechee Audubon, Attn Membership**

**PO Box 13424,**

**Savannah, GA 31416**

*Contributions are tax deductible.*